

ANOTHER

High Road to Hell.

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ANOTHER

High Road to Hell



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A N O T H E R
High Road to HELL.

A N E S S A Y

by Ignotus R.
O N T H E

Pernicious Nature and destructive Effects
of the MODERN ENTERTAINMENTS

F R O M T H E

P U L P I T.

Occasioned by a PAMPHLET,

E N T I T L E D

The Stage the High Road to Hell, &c.

*He that walketh with wise Men, shall be wise: but a
Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.* SOLOMON.

L O N D O N:

Printed for T. VERNOR and J. CHATER, Ludgate-hill,
MDCCLXVII.

[Price One Shilling.]

ANOTHER

High Road to HELL.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

Pericious Nature and destructive Effects
of the Modern ENTERTAINMENTS

FROM THE

P U B L I S H E R S

Occasionally by J. A. M. P. H. L. E. T.

ENTITLED



The Stage the High Road to Hell, &c.

The first number of this work, will be useful to the
Companion of Fools, shall be destroyed.
Solomon.

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PREFACE.

AS the Author has nothing to fear from the world, and as little to hope from it, he has not been very solicitous about the public acceptance of the following pages. But as he soberly thinks the sentiments contained in them to be true and important, he cannot but wish to prevent his readers mistaking him, which is the only reason he has for writing a preface. For this end it may be proper to inform the reader before-hand, that the expression of disgust against the Pulpit in the title, and whatever like expressions may occur in the following pages, are by no means intended to signify that the office of a clergyman, or minister of God's word, is itself a proper subject of ridicule: but as somebody says of kings, they have a

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divine right to rule *well*, but that will by no means infer that they have a divine right to be tyrants: So we may say of the gospel ministry, That such as God has fitted for that service, have a divine right to speak the truth of God as they are able, but we cannot say they have a divine right to betray or corrupt it.

As the Author whose performance gave occasion to the following thoughts does not, by the Stage, mean that frame of wood, &c. on which the actors perform, but the performances thereon; so the Author of the following pages has no disgust at the Pulpit, but at the use commonly made of it.

It cannot be denied; that the truth of the gospel was propagated at the first to the nations by preaching, and that it is still the appointment of God for calling the attention of mankind to his divine grace, and for building up his people in that grace; but it is the Pulpit being now generally used in opposition
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to that grace which bringeth salvation, that is the detestable thing herein censured. The scorn that is cast on the clergy of all denominations, by infidels and libertines, is certainly very unjust; as is every thing else that they suffer from the mistaken conceit that they are friends to the religion of Jesus Christ. If therefore the following essay could but serve to clear them of this charge, it might, by that means, reconcile to them the men of most repute in the polite world for philosophy and enlarged sentiments.

Nor ought the Author to be charged with so much as the remotest wish for any change in the national establishment, since he is so well pleased with the present national church, as to be fully satisfied it could never be succeeded by a better. If the present ecclesiastical establishment serves the purposes of government, and is for the benefit of civil society, (as seems very evident) it is all we can have from any such establishment of religion: And as some religious

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precedency seems absolutely necessary in every state, such an establishment, and such a toleration as we enjoy in this land, is all that any christian can wish for. For he must greatly mistake the religion of Jesus Christ, who should think it was at all fit for a national church, or possible to be practised by any whole nation of this world.

Every man must see the truth of that proposition of archbishop Tillotson's (with whatever propriety his Lordship could maintain it) that a nation of this world as such, can only be the subject of temporal promises and threatnings, as it is not, as a nation, capable of any other than temporal rewards and punishments. But all the promises and threatnings, all the rewards and punishments connected with the religion of Jesus Christ, are eternal; consequently it cannot be a national religion.

Any man that thinks it may, would do well to consider the laws given to Christ's disciples, and try if he can
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think of any nation of this world being governed by them; such as, *I say unto you, resist not evil, &c. Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD seek after, &c.*

As all polite nations have found it necessary to have an established religion, so they have also thought it proper to admit and authorize some public entertainments and diversions.

If the former serves to promote loyalty to the state, good neighbourhood, and decency of character among the subjects, these are valuable effects, and all we ought to expect from it.

If the latter serve to polish our manners, and keep persons of leisure and dissipation out of worse mischiefs, they also have their use; for as a late author says, "It is better for a man to see Sir John Brute acted on the stage, than to
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act him himself in the street." Whether this benefit will counterbalance its other mischiefs, is not for me to determine.

This is all the Author has to say to save himself from the charge of being an enemy to the clergy, the established church, or any other body of people wearing the christian name.

He assures the reader that he is far from grudging them any honours or advantages that they may obtain, only he would warn every one who may happen to listen to him, not to trust them as sure guides to heaven, lest they too late find their mistake.

The character and station which the government allots the clergy in the church of England, and the personal excellencies of many of them of all denominations, demand our veneration and respect, and ought to secure them from that illiberal and low abuse which
has

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has been very unjustly cast upon the whole body. In short, the following pages do not reflect on the clergy for being clergy, but for corrupting the truth and misleading their followers. If they can be cleared of this blame, the Author promises to confess his fault in blaming them, as publicly as he now brings the charge. As the reader would be very little the wiser, and not at all the better, for knowing who wrote this pamphlet, the Author has reason to think it best, for the present, to be

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treacherously dangerous to the souls of men; and he had certainly a just right to give warning of the danger he saw. It may indeed be

questioned, whether seeing the characters in real life, is not yet more dangerous than seeing them represented on the stage; but as it is probable **ANOTHER** cell or a hermitage, we may both do well to shun the dangers we see, and fairly give our

High Road to Hell.

The Author of the following pages, without disputing the mischiefs done by the stage, or attempting to become an advocate for it, **A** MAN who has learned his Religion only from the Bible, will not be frightened by any alarming thing that may be said of any of his ways, if the warning is unsupported by that sacred authority.

The Author of the pamphlet intitled, *The Stage the high Road to Hell*, seems too much to have neglected this thought, having never produced one part of Scripture, in which the meer representing the various characters that are in the world is condemned. He may doubtless have very good reason for his apprehensions, that attendance on and delight in theatrical performances, is ex-

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treably dangerous to the souls of men; and he had certainly a just right to give warning of the danger he saw. It may indeed be questioned, whether seeing the characters in real life, is not yet more dangerous than seeing them represented on the stage; but as it is probable neither of us are disposed for a cell or a hermitage, we may both do well to shun the dangers we see, and fairly give our neighbours warning.

The Author of the following pages, without disputing the mischiefs done by the stage, or attempting to become an advocate for it, claims the same right to alarm the public with warning of another way to perdition, much more frequented and much less suspected, and therefore more dangerous than that which the abovementioned Author has described.

If that Author has proved that the Stage is used in a way utterly contrary to its pretence of serving the cause of morality, so the following pages are intended to prove that the Pulpit is used in a manner quite as opposite to any pretence it can have of serving the cause of real Christianity. So that the conclusion

clusion will be, if there is any morality among us, no thanks to the Stage for it; and if there is any Christianity among us, no thanks to the Pulpit. It should seem therefore a very little occasion of grief to a christian, although it be true, that "Many among us are of opinion, that theatrical amusements preclude the church, and render the preaching of its ministers unnecessary;" for this is no more to a christian, than it would be to a modest man, should he be told, that one house of ill fame was getting the customers from another of equal or greater infamy. As the Stage is charged with recommending evil things under fair appearances, so may the Pulpit, with as much greater aggravation as the greater pretence to solemnity and piety can add to it. If performers on the Stage are to be blamed because, "*p. 4. they assume a feigned character and utter sentiments to which the heart is a stranger,*" how much more detestable must Satan's ministers be, when * *transformed as the ministers of righteousness!* As to the moral characters either of Preachers or Players, it seems better to drop all contention about them; for if Preachers have been found fully as bad, in respect of moral

* 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

character, as ever Player was, the greater shame and censure will fall where the most grave and sacred pretensions were made. So, with this Author's leave, we will forget all the evil stories he tells of wicked Players, lest some should incline to compare them with many strange stories of naughty Clergymen; and instead of insisting on such comparisons, let us only consider the evil tendency of their trades. I cannot fully agree with this Author in grudging the Players their gains, seeing 'tis no expence to any but such as chuse it; no man is taxed for their maintenance, as they are for the Clergy. As this Author assures us, both at beginning and end of his performance, that his conscience obliged him to bear this testimony against stage-entertainments, we may well presume, a man so conscientious will readily agree to an appeal to the Scriptures, for a determination of any question about what ways lead men to perdition, although he has not himself made much use of them for this end.

If he had been much acquainted with his Bible, it might have cooled his zeal for the honour of *black cloth*, and have reconciled him to the exposing the Clergy as well as other

other men who may act ridiculously and wickedly, to the contempt they deserve; whether by plays or any other way. And it might have shewed him too, that however foreign stage-entertainments may be from the gospel, or however opposite to it, yet that the doctrine and honour of the clergy are no less foreign or opposite: at least a better recollection of the Bible might have saved him from the mistake of attributing those words to Solomon, p. 4. Ded. * *The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* And I the rather take notice of this little mistake, because if the Author had regarded the important connection of those words as they stand in the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xvii. 5—9. it might perhaps have somewhat abated his devout confidence in the Leaders of Religion. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, &c.*

Could a man, believing the scripture account of the Son of God, quote with such full approbation that celebrated saying of Plato, as this Author is pleased to give it us: "If Virtue was to appear in its native beauty to mankind, its charms would,

* Jer. xvii. 9.

“with irresistible force, captivate all hearts?” Did not virtue appear in its native beauty to mankind, when the Son of God went about on earth doing good? But did the charms of virtue made visible in him, captivate all hearts? A man that has not learning enough to be the wiser for any thing that Plato or Seneca have said, may clearly see that this zeal for virtue is a very different thing from delight in the perfectly virtuous character of the Son of God; and that it may subsist without any inclination to imitate that character.

The following pages go wholly on the supposition that the word of God, by which we must be judged at the last day, is alone sufficient to point out to us the danger of all the various ways in which men go down to destruction. 'Tis only by this word that the pernicious nature, and damnable tendency of the modern Pulpit-Entertainments can be discovered. And if that word does not warrant all that follows, it will be in vain for the author to talk of good meanings and pious wishes. It is regard to the doctrines and commandments of men, that makes the word of God of none effect, and leads men to strain

at gnats and swallow camels; and if the author above refer'd to should appear to be doing so, he is far from being singular. But if the religion of Jesus Christ as preached by him and his apostles, be permitted to determine which is the broad way that leadeth to destruction, and which the narrow way that leadeth to life eternal, we may come to find no less occasion to sound the alarm to the Preachers and their followers, than to Comedians and their admirers. And, however strange it is, the purpose of the following pages is to shew, that the danger of the *devout way* to perdition is by far the greatest, because most trodden and least suspected. Whether this is true or no is suspended on the proof of the following propositions.

1. That there is a devout as well as a profane way to eternal perdition.

2. The present Pulpit-Entertainments in general lead men in this way.

If the Scriptures keep us in countenance in maintaining these propositions, we shall not be fatally put to the blush, although we should neither please men distinguished by their piety, nor yet the advocates for those amuse-

ments at which devout people make wry faces. Nor indeed can we at all expect to please either.

That there is a devout way of going to hell cannot be doubted, if the New Testament is to determine upon it, so long as Christ's account of the Pharisees is to be found there; for they are positively declared to* be the children of hell, and in a way that † could not escape damnation. He who knew what was in man, testified of them that § They were of their father the devil, and would do his works; and he scarce pronounced a woe on any of the sons of men in which they were not chiefly interested.

But I need not take pains to prove that these ancient people found a devout way to hell, for it is of no importance to us, if we are in no danger of going the same road. Whether therefore we are in any danger of taking that for the way to heaven in which they went down to hell, may deserve a sober inquiry. And we cannot do this without considering their way, and discovering how so plausible a path came to have so fatal an end. That

* Math. xxiii. 15.

† Math. xxiii. 33.

§ John viii. 44.

they were hypocrites, is true, but then this was seen by none but by him who knew their hearts; for their conduct and appearance * justified them *before men*, and they † *outwardly appeared righteous to men*; which they could not have done if they had not appeared to be *sincere, honest, sober, chaste*, and in some cases *bountiful to the distressed*, as well as *fervent in their devotions*. No man could appear to be righteous among any people, wanting the appearance of any of these.

That the Pharisee is represented as exalting himself in his prayers § is true, but he is not charged with lying before his Maker when he says, “ *I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess*: so that we are still allowed to think what he said of himself was true. Their knowledge about religious matters was so highly esteemed, as that their judgment about Christ was thought sufficient to be opposed to the evidence that attended his miracles, and the unavoidable conclusion against him is hinted by their saying, † *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed?* Their zeal for

* Luke xvi. 15.

† Math. xxiii. 28.

§ Luke xviii. 10—14.

† John vii. 48.

the divine law, lead them to be very scrupulous of any approach towards a breach of it; therefore they gave tithes of all that they possessed, even mint, annise, and cummin, and all herbs. They observed Christ's disciples rubbing ears of corn in their hands on the sabbath, and were offended; they desired the people that needed healing to come on other days and be healed, and not on the sabbath; so that they were a kind of SOCIETY FOR REFORMATION OF MANNERS. And then, so solicitous were they that men of other nations might enjoy the divine law with them †, that they *compassed sea and land to make a proselyte from the heathen nations.*

This short sketch of the Pharisees character (which might have been much enlarged) shews, that as far as men can see of one another, they had a good title to the place they held as first rate examples of human righteousness. And this Jesus seems to allow when (he being about to shew how much farther the divine law extended than either his disciples or the Jews thought) he said to his disciples, *§ Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no*

† Math. xxiii. 15,

§ Math. v. 20.

*case enter into the kingdom of heaven, which is plainly saying, they are going devoutly to hell. Nor can we think that Saul of Tarsus was singular among them when, touching the righteousness that is of the law (as they and he understood it) he was blameless. Or that they were less perswaded of being right, or less sincere than he was, when he VERILY THOUGHT he OUGHT to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Accordingly they were as forward to claim a peculiar relation to God as any under the Christian name can be, and said, * We have one father even God. And to this they had the sanction of all that were esteemed for station in the church, or for wisdom and piety, so that we cannot expect to see them outdone, either in their real character for piety and devotion, their attainments in wisdom and righteousness, or their confident claims on the peculiar favour of God. To persons thus distinguished from the common herd of mankind, it must be always very provoking to hear Jesus say, † Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. Or yet more severely, § Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? And in answer to*

* John viii. 41.

† Mat. xxi. 31.

§ Mat. xxiii. 23.

their peculiar claim of being the children of God; to hear him say, *Ye are of your father, the devil, and his works ye will do.* These sayings and many more that might be mentioned fully prove one proposition: There is a devout way to hell.

And we are as clearly told how this happened. * *They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* And this is the same account as Paul gives of the matter when he says, *I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.* This warrants us to say with the greatest confidence, that all devout people, however distinguished by the Christian name, if they are trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and going about to establish their own righteousness, are following them to perdition in the same devout way. This makes our way clear to the
2d Proposition. *The present Pulpit-Entertainments in general lead men in this way.*

* Luke xviii 9.

The proof of this depends upon the evidence that shall be produced of their leading men to trust in themselves that they are righteous. 'Tis plain the Pharisees did not think themselves *absolutely* sinless, but comparatively so, as being much nearer to the kingdom of heaven than publicans and harlots: but they never meant to deny that they had human infirmities and failings, else why did they fast twice in the week, if they had no sin to confess?

And indeed we find them not free of suspicion, lest they were still deficient, and all was not quite right with them: one of them enquires of Christ, *What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? I have kept all the commandments, what lack I yet?* So that these as well as modern devout people had their doubts and fears lest they were not quite meet for eternal life. We may also observe, that they ascribed all the difference between them and others to a work of divine grace, and said, *God I thank thee* that I am not as other men are. Nay after all they seem jealous that the whole law is too extensive for them; and therefore they wanted to find what was the *main* thing in religion, that if they should be found wanting in some circumstances,

stantials, yet they might be right in the main, being sound in fundamentals, and having the root of the matter in them: therefore one of them asketh of Jesus, * Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Their great mistake therefore was no more than this: They thought that God would regard and accept them on account of that difference which himself had made between them and others, by implanting in them a principle of grace, leading them to avoid sin, and regard his law.

The parallel between these, and the bulk of devout people in our day, would be too obvious to need any more words about it, were it not that the modern Pharisees confess Christ in words, and say much about salvation by him; whereas those ancient Pharisees called him a blasphemer, and crucified him as such. In order therefore to prove that the modern doctrine of the pulpit leads men to the same awful end, in the same pernicious way, as that in which the Jews *stumbled, and fell, and were broken, and snared, and taken*; we must prove that it is for substance the same as theirs. And if this doctrine be found

* Matt. xxii. 36.

to be parallel with the doctrine of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, the conclusion must be, that whatever they pretend, they believe not the record that God hath given of his Son; and † *He that believeth not shall be damned.* As the great mistake both of ancient and modern Pharisees is concerning acceptance with God, and a title to his favour, it may be necessary to state the scriptural account of it, and then compare the modern doctrine therewith.

The scriptural account of this matter is, That God found *none righteous, no, not one* among the sons of men; and that he pronounced a curse on them all, because they had *not continued in all things written in his law to do them.* But that, seeing the truth of God, declared in his law, could not be maintained, and sin against that law pass unpunished, he was pleased to lay on his Beloved Son the iniquities of all with whom he partook in flesh and blood, that he might deliver them *from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them.* When he had fully honoured the law by obeying it, and bearing

† Mark xvi. 16.

the curse of it instead of the guilty, he rose from the dead, as the assurance that his work was perfect, and his offering for sin accepted. As God declared himself well pleased in his offering for sin, and has put it out of all doubt by his raising him from the dead, we can have a *lively hope* of the eternal inheritance no other way but by his resurrection from the dead; for he hath made us accepted no other way but *in the beloved*. Nothing therefore ought (and nothing but some destructive lie can) deliver us from the fear of the curse of God's law, but his being *made a curse* for sinners, *and raised again for their justification*. This was all he proposed to his servant John when suffering banishment for his sake, and when dying with fear at the sight of his Lord: ** Fear not, I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.* This then is the great point to be kept in view in trying the spirits whether they are of God, viz. from what arises their hope of God's favour, or, what is the reason they give that men may not despair, when, conscious of sin, they think of standing before God in judgment.

The reason of their hope must be, either what they themselves are in distinction from those who perish; or else it must be, the work of the Son of God. The former was the reason of the Pharisees hope; the latter is the reason of hope among Christ's disciples. Whoever lead men to the former as a reason of their hope, are as the Pharisees were, *† blind leaders of the blind, and, if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* And in them is fulfilled what the Prophet complained of, *§ the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed.* Now if the reader is heartily agreed with me that the hinge of good hope is not that by which one man is made more commendable in this world than another, but that in the Son of God by which HE is distinguished from all meer men, even that he did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth: if (I say) the reader is agreed to say; *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,* I have no doubt of his concurrence, in exposing every false way, however respectable the names that patronize it, with such confidence as the Apostle had when he said, *|| If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel*

† Mat. xv. 14.

§ Isaiah ix. 16.

|| Gal. i. 8.

unto you than that which the apostles preached, let him be accursed. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Nor will he hesitate to say, that he that believes not that doctrine which the apostles were sent to preach to the nations, let him be as morally, devoutly, sincerely, or experimentally righteous as ever sinful man was, shall be damned. In comparing the modern doctrines with, and trying them by the divine rule, I shall take the liberty to represent them in my own words, that I may save myself and my readers the labour of large and numerous quotations. In doing this I shall confine myself to this single, but the most important point, viz. to shew how the modern *Ministers of Religion* encourage their followers to hope for eternal life.

By some we are told, that a *sober, virtuous, well-spent life, is the best preparative for death; and that consciousness of this has been a cordial to the heart of many a well disposed christian, when going out of this world.* They assure us that *consciousness of integrity, and just intention in life and action, may make a man survey his past life without dismay, although some frailties may be found about him which serve to shew that he was but a man, and in respect of these he may hope for mercy.*

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I have only to observe on this source of hope, that if a man has not sinned, *he shall surely live, he shall not die.* If he has sinned, *his righteousness shall not profit him;* he is under the curse which God has unalterably pronounced *on such as continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them:* so * there is no difference between him and others, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Deliverance from this curse comes only from Christ being made a curse for us; *and he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.* † So that if there be any teachers of this hope, there are at least so many instances of the truth of the proposition. For this doctrine stands thus: The virtuous man, although not free from sin, hath a hope of eternal life, such as the vicious man hath no foundation for, and ought not to entertain. But why not? if God will be pleased with less than perfect righteousness, who told them that he will not be pleased without any at all? The law requires perfect righteousness; who hath altered it? or rather who hath disgraced it, as not

* Romans iii. 22, 23.

† John iii. 18.

holy, just and good? § Now we know that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. This pretence of virtue is one of the ways in which men, called Christians, trust in themselves that they are righteous; but it may be doubted whether these men of virtue and piety are so orthodox as to thank God that they are not as other men are.

Others, who say less about virtue and piety as the reason of hope, and do not boast of the supreme energy of these to make mens peace with God, tell us, *if we sincerely repent and unfeignedly believe the holy gospel*, we may entertain such hopes as the unbelievers and impenitent are strangers to, and ought not to entertain. Now this way of talking may *seem* to have as many scriptures for it as there are importing that he that believes in Jesus Christ is justified by him. Yet if we examine it, we may find that it hinges all the hope of a sinner on the *sincerity* of his faith and repentance, as much as, in the former case, it is hinged on piety and virtue. If I unfeignedly believe, &c. I may hope. But this is a

gospel that will give me no hope, till I can prove (or at least get a good conceit of) my own sincerity. And when I get this hope, what is the foundation of it, but a trust in myself that I am righteous, so far as sincerity is righteousness? And thus my hope depends on that by which I am distinguished from infidels and hypocrites. It is true, every sincere penitent, and unfeigned believer of Christ's words, has good hope; but then his hope does not arise from any assurance of his own sincerity, but from what the truth, which he believes, testifies, about the sincerity of Christ's heart and the perfection of his work. The hope that arises from our sincerity in any thing, is certainly a very different hope from that which comes by hearing Christ say, *Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead, &c.* This truth, believed in the heart, may and will produce a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory; while yet the man who believes it, is far from finding, or wishing to find, as a source of hope, any reason to vouch for the sincerity of his heart, which, this very truth gives him to know, is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.* It is because this sincerity is a thing not so easily proved, that Christians, after they have professed faith and repentance, are exhorted to

to § *examine themselves, whether they be in the faith, and to prove themselves, &c.* We are therefore confident to say, let the faith about which men are supposed to be so unfeignedly employed, be expressed never so scripturally, and believed never so sincerely, yet it is not the faith of God's elect, if the hope it gives does not arise wholly from the truth they believe, exclusive of any dependance on the sincerity of their belief. Nothing is more common than for men to take it for granted that their faith is unfeigned, and their repentance sincere; and yet it is also very common to see the hypocrisy of both exposed in the lives of those who are thus flattering themselves. We must therefore conclude, That the gospel affords a reason of hope and joy to *sinners*, without any occasion for a conceit of their own sincerity to encourage their hope: And that our faith can never be proved to be unfeigned, but by its having the same effects as it used to have in all such who knew the grace of God in truth. God purifies the hearts of men by 'the faith; and it is only faith working by love to Christ's name, that can prove it to be unfeigned; and that our hope and joy are not those of the hypocrite.

§ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Now

Now that *hope* of eternal life must be false and destructive, which is not founded on that which gives a *title* to eternal life. Our defective sincerity does not give a title to eternal life, else is Christ dead in vain: therefore hope derived from it is only a hope which shall perish, like the hope of the hypocrite. And all the pulpits used for promoting this hope which will make ashamed, are so many instances of the pulpit being a way to hell.

But all this censure on the bustle men make about sincerity will be granted, and the advocates for that doctrine despised as legalists, or some other name out of repute amongst orthodox people; and all this, by such as differ from them only in their taking a wider circuit, to come at last into the same road. The difference is, that instead of calling their idol *sincerity*, they chuse to call it *grace*, *experience*, or the *new creature*, the better to disguise their deceit and secure their party. We may the better understand these deceivers by attending to their way of speaking comfort to their followers, when dejected with the consciousness of guilt and fear of divine wrath. This may be represented in a short
 expe-

experimental dialogue between a leader of
this sort and one of his devout followers.

Hearer. Dear sir, I am very uneasy with
the fear of death, as I know not what will be-
come of me if I die as I now am, I am
afraid, destitute of true grace.

Preacher. But why so much afraid of
death and its consequences? you know Christ
died for sinners, and such as are *sensible* sin-
ners, and *would fain lay hold on him, shall not*
perish.

H. But what hope can his dying for sin-
ners give me, seeing he did not die for all
sinners? but as he says, he laid down his life
for his sheep, I want to know that I am one
of his sheep.

P. I grant it can give you no comfort to
know, only in general, that Christ died for
sinners: but has he not made you a *sensible*
sinner? *i. e.* one awakened and convinced of
sin? In this he hath begun the good work of
grace in you, which he will perform to the
day

day of Jesus Christ. From this you ought to take comfort, as a token that you are one of his sheep. A chosen vessel.

H. But I am often discouraged with doubts whether the good work is begun in me or not, because I find my heart unaffected, and my mind wandering, and carnally disposed in religious exercises. I do not find those comfortable frames, and warm affections, that I once did, and which I see enjoyed by others.

P. You are at present under a cloud, until the spirit of God shall please to shine on his own work; but yet you ought not to indulge your unbelieving fears about your state. This is raising foundations, and doing dishonour to the spirit of God, to call in question his work, and deny his evidence, by admitting these doubts about all that you have experienced.

H. But is it not possible that I may have deceived myself, about my being born again? This is the thing I fear, seeing I have so much sin remaining unmortified in my heart, and such darkness and fear filling my mind, after

all my endeavours to recover my comfort by recollecting past experiences.

P. I cannot say it is absolutely impossible for a person to think himself regenerate when he is not so; but however such may deceive themselves, you have plain facts for evidence of it: the change that has taken place in you is undeniable. You was once careless about your soul and eternity, now you have deep and hearty concern about them. You used to sin without remorse, now, though you do sometimes fall, yet it is a grief to you. You used to be indifferent about Christ and his righteousness, now the language of your heart is, None but Christ. You used to slight, or it may be despise the people of God, now you love them, and not only in your own party, but in all the professions of christianity. This is such a change as shews that you are not now dead in trespasses in sins, but may say, Whereas I was once blind, now I see.

H. This does sometimes comfort me a little, but then I soon lose it again, and am suspicious after all.

P. But do not be suspicious of the work of the spirit of God, for you cannot deny but you

you have found your heart's desire to embrace Christ, and close with him, as offered to you in the gospel. You have found much love to him, and have had many love tokens from him, and have been enabled to say, My beloved is mine, and I am his. Now you must call to mind these years of the right hand of the Most High, and not fear that he who hath done all this in you will cast you off after all; for he hateth putting away,

This is but a short sketch out of a cart-load of experimental divinity; but nothing can be plainer than that the hope *squeezed* out of this sort of reasoning, rests as much on the truth of their regeneration, as it does in the former instance on the sincerity of their faith and repentance. And both of these are foreign to the hope given by the gospel, which rests neither more nor less on any thing wrought in him to whom it gives hope, but merely on this testimony, that Jesus Christ was delivered to death for the offences of sinners, and raised again for their justification.

Now as that is a man's righteousness which gives him hope before God, we must say of these as of all the rest, they trust in them-

selves that they are righteous, and despise others.

Only that this latter is the more abominable, as it provides the most exquisite gratification for devout pride, abuses the most important scripture phrases and declarations to the vilest purposes, and even makes conscience silent, or of their party for fear of the grievous sin of unbelief; and by alarming their apprehension, lest questioning this evidence of their being regenerate, should be some approach toward the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost.

To instance but in one more class of people called Christians, which makes our survey almost universal. Others make a much shorter cut into the same road as the rest, and without troubling themselves or their hearers about regeneration or experiences, assure them and urge them to believe that God hath made a grant of Christ and all his benefits to all mankind, so as to give sufficient ground for any man to appropriate them to himself, and say without reserve or hesitation, Christ loved *me* and gave himself for *me*, so that I shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

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And if this appropriation be warranted in the word of God, the absolute assurance of eternal life must certainly be inseparably connected with it. But what is the ground of the hope that comes this way? If Christ gave himself for all the human race, and so for me among the rest, I can have no assurance from thence, of my salvation, without being assured at the same time that the whole human race shall be saved. If my hope depends on being assured that he gave himself for *me*, in a sense in which he did not give himself for them that perish, on what evidence peculiar to me does this assurance of his having died for *me*, as he did not for them that perish, depend? Or in other words, as there is no mention or description of me in particular, in the scripture account of Christ's death, what is there about me to assure me that he died for me? The answer can only be, because I have been enabled to appropriate Christ and all his benefits to myself, which those others have not been enabled to do. Thus the hope of eternal life does not arise solely from what Christ has done, but in part at least on what I have been enabled to do, and by doing it, to distinguish myself from others. Nay so important is this appropriating act, that all that which Christ has done can be no comfort to me without it!

Now if I might be permitted, with proper deference to my superiors, I would expostulate a little with all these different parties, and say, Why all this difference and animosity among people that are really agreed in the main? For surely that which can give hope to a sinner before his Maker, must be the main thing in religion. As all are agreed that it is a good disposition of mind brought forth into act and exercise that gives hope, why should they disagree about the name they call it by? If one calls it the *habits of virtue and piety*: Another calls it *sincere repentance and unfeigned faith*: Another, *the change wrought in man by the spirit of God implanting a principle of grace in him*: And another calls it, *the act of appropriation*: why should they differ about words and names, seeing they might even exchange names with each other without injuring the main thing in any of their systems at all? But whether these things can be compromised or not, matters little to any lover of the gospel which Christ and his apostles preached, for neither party have any thing to do with that gospel but to corrupt it. After all that has been said, it will be no surprise to the reader to be told that modern christianity is a very different religion from that which Jesus Christ

and

and his apostles taught. That it differs from it in that which is the main thing in any religion; even, what it is that can give hope to a dying sinner, who is to be eternally happy or miserable. If it should be enquired, where may that religion be seen which Christ and his apostles taught? The answer is, In the Bible, and no where in any other form than it appears in there. He that has learned from his Bible what christianity was, and how it appeared at the first, will immediately know it from all counterfeits, if he should see it in the world.

Fairly to examine the various modern pretensions to christianity, we must compare the effects of it in the lives of its professors, with the effects produced in the beginning among them that believed and knew the grace of God in truth. It cannot be doubted but the same sentiments will produce the same effects in all that really believe them to the end of the world.

This is a rule by which Christ taught his disciples to detect false teachers. * *Beware of*

* Matth. vii. 15—20.

false

false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruit ye shall know them. By this divine rule we ought to judge and to be judged. And whenever we see among professors of christianity, a ravening after riches, honour, esteem, influence, or any other thing contrary to the humble and self-denying character of the Son of God, we can be at no loss to know what is hidden under the sheep's cloathing. If we see real christianity, we shall find a people, although in a great trial of affliction and deep poverty, abounding in the riches of their liberality; and esteeming this only to be pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world: and esteeming that an impure and corrupt religion that teaches men apologies for the neglect of this. But if we look on modern christianity we see clergymen, of every sort and sect, courting applause and popularity, maintaining their clerical dignity and pretence

pretence to ambassadorship, enlarging their incomes by every mean in their power, laying up treasures to aggrandize their families, indulging in voluptuousness and expensive living, while the poor starve for food and have no covering from the cold. Thus did not Christ. Thus do not christians. *By their fruits ye shall know them, for, he that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.* Every one must see how easy it would be to draw the contrast between ancient and modern christianity to a great length; but this specimen may suffice to shew, that we cannot call the christianity commonly professed in Europe, under various forms, the religion taught by Jesus Christ; without putting darkness for light, and light for darkness, calling evil good, and good evil. If it appears that the modern doctrine of the pulpits, although diversified enough to be named *Legion*, is calculated to promote a delusive, and destructive hope, and that the teachers and abettors of such doctrine are also the example of an impure and corrupt religion, that does not teach its votaries, and influence them, to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and

godly, in this present world, we must conclude and maintain that we have proved, that the pulpit has abundantly more right than the stage, to be called the high way to hell.

Presuming on this I shall conclude with a paragraph borrowed and a little varied from the severe reflection on players in *The Stage the high road to hell*. Only think of preachers instead of stage-players, and the paragraph will run thus. “ What must we think of men
 “ who make it their whole business to draw in
 “ deluded mortals, to a deceiving hope
 “ of eternal life, by disguising the truth,
 “ with all the decentful arts and allurements
 “ which their genius and interest can suggest! May they not be considered as Demons in a human shape, who thus pursue
 “ the same end as the first deceiver? Are
 “ they not the worst enemies of mankind?
 “ Those surely who debauch the consciences
 “ of their fellow-creatures are their worst enemies, and must be deemed by all that fear
 “ God, greater destroyers than murderers and
 “ highway robbers; for what are life and
 “ property if weighed in a balance with eternal salvation? Or what is the guilt of those
 “ who destroy the body only, when compared
 “ with

“ with the heinousness of their guilt who de-
 “ ceive our souls, by leading us to trust in
 “ that which cannot save us from the wrath
 “ of him who is able to destroy both soul and
 “ body in hell ?”

F I N I S.

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